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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2006

In Today's Papers

Erdogan Rejects Calls from President and Opposition for Early Elections

All papers report President Sezer called for early general elections in April, saying that Turkey has entered a "problematic period." Opposition leaders Deniz Baykal of CHP and Mehmet Agar of DYP supported the call, but Prime Minister Erdogan maintained elections will be held on schedule and not before. Erdogan said the existing parliament will elect the president as scheduled. "The Constitution has a provision regarding the presidential elections and it cannot be changed according to anybody's wishes," he stressed. "Those who cannot even tend to a flock of two sheep [i.e. handle the simplest of tasks] are talking about early polls," remarked an angry Erdogan.

Erdogan also claimed most lawmakers in the parliament oppose early elections because they are afraid of not being re-elected.

Blair to Pay a "Surprise Visit" to Turkey

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Yeni Safak: On Friday, British Prime Minister Tony Blair will pay a brief visit to Ankara immediately after EU leaders wrap up a Brussels summit that would see a decision to slow down Ankara's membership talks. Sabah expects Blair to urge Erdogan to stick with the EU entry bid. Yeni Safak claims Blair is coming to Turkey to announce an EU decision to open discussions on four new negotiation chapters. Blair and Erdogan will also discuss Cyprus and the Middle East. Following his contacts in Ankara, on Saturday Blair will go to Egypt, the first leg in his Middle East tour of four countries. The details of his program have not been revealed, except for a meeting with Palestinian President Abbas in Ramallah on Monday.

Urbancic Meets Turkish Press on the PKK

Hurriyet, Milliyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report

Principal Deputy Coordinator for Counterterrorism Frank Urbancic briefed Turkish journalists in Washington on the US steps to counter the PKK, particularly in Europe. Urbancic stressed that the US wants an end to the PKK. "The PKK must lay down arms. We are not

interested in establishing contact with the organization, ceasefire, or meeting with them," Urbancic told the Turkish press. Cumhuriyet reports on its front page that the US will pressure Europe to end support of the PKK, by putting an end to PKK propaganda, cutting off financial sources and not providing political asylum to the PKK members. Zaman quotes Urbancic extensively under a headline, "Call Me a Liar if you Want, but We are Sincere about the Fight against the PKK." "A Turk killed in southeast Turkey is a serious concern for us; it's not different than an American being killed in Izmir or California," he said. Several papers carry Urbancic's statement that the PKK "is like an octopus" with Milliyet quoting him as saying "The PKK in Europe has many methods of operation - even doing things like extorting protection money from kebab sellers. We expect new anti-PKK steps from Europe." Papers report that, accompanied by the State Department Southeast Europe Director Doug Silliman, Urbancic visited six European countries in ten days in an effort to "stop the PKK's activities." In an interview with the all-news NTV, Urbancic said his visits together with some top US officials to Europe would continue next year.

Sabah meanwhile says in a front page report that Turkish special envoy for countering the PKK, retired General Edip Baser, might quit his job after arguing with some bureaucrats at the Prime Ministry when his large staff of 13 was not given offices in the same building as Baser.

A/S Peter Rodman in Turkey for High Level Defense Group Meeting Aksam, Zaman, Vatan, Yeni Safak and others: In Turkey to chair the visiting US Defense delegation, which visited Turkey for the Turkey-US High Level Defense Group Meeting, Assistant Secretary of Defense Peter Rodman said during a roundtable with reporters that the "US wants to be a reliable ally of Turkey. We attach great

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importance to Turkey's contribution to attaining stability in the region. Therefore, we are trying to give the appropriate responses to the concerns of Ankara. All of us expect concrete results in the fight against the PKK. Turning the Turkey-Iraq border into a border of peace is a main goal of the US."

Editorial Commentary on Iraq, EU

Yilmaz Altug, writing in the conservative Turkiye, warns of the implications of the escalating Sunni-Shiite violence in Iraq: "There is a civil war in Iraq between Shiites, trained by Iran, and Sunnis.

The Shiite groups resemble an army under al-Sadr. Fearing Iranian influence, Saudis are now talking about intervening, as there is growing fear about Sunnis being wiped out after an ethnic cleansing.

On the other hand, President Bush seems to be listening to advice in the Baker-Hamilton report and working on a pull-out program. Even if the US works on strengthening the central government in Iraq, hoping that it will take measures to decrease the level of violence, reality indicates the opposite will happen. When the US forces pull out of Iraq, the fight between Sunnis and Shiites will accelerate even more. Given the fact that Lebanon is also going through a civil war, the Middle East will eventually find itself in greater turmoil. When we look at the big picture, can we possibly talk about a federal Iraq where Sunnis, Shiites and Kurds will be live together?"

Camel Sacrifice at Istanbul Airport Sparks Debate

All papers: On Tuesday Turkish Airlines (THY) publicly sacrificed a camel on the tarmac to mark the retirement of a fleet of aircraft associated with accidents. Yesterday's mainstream dailies gave extensive front page coverage to the incident with photos of the camel and THY personnel holding the sacrificed animal's flesh in their hands. There was a huge reaction to the incident and Transportation Minister Binali Yildirim announced the suspension of the THY manager who was responsible for arranging the slaughter. Meanwhile, opposition party ANAVATAN deputy Huseyin Guler launched a formal legislative query into the incident yesterday and asked "Is this brutal event something that serves the image of contemporary Turkey on the way to membership in the European Union?"

Increased Violence in the Universities Protested

Cumhuriyet reports that a group of professors and students from Ankara University protested recent violence and "fascist attacks"

against students. There were protests at the Middle East Technical University as well to criticize violent attacks all over Turkey mainly against male students who "have long hair, wear earrings or are of Kurdish origin."

TV Highlights  
NTV, 6.00 A.M.

#### Domestic News

- Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk returned to Istanbul from Stockholm late on Wednesday, saying he accepted the prize for Turkey as fans applauded at Istanbul's Ataturk Airport.
- Lawyers from Istanbul Bar Association will stage demonstrations on December 15 to protest the isolation of inmates in F-type prisons.
- 20,000 jobseekers have applied for 1500 vacant posts at the state-owned tea producer Caykur in the Black Sea city of Rize, revealing the striking dimensions of unemployment in Turkey.
- The Turkish Central Bank sets 4 percent inflation target until [12009](#).
- World Bank projects Turkey's current deficit to reach 8 percent by the end of 2006, and to decline to 7.5 percent in 2007 and to 6.4 in

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[12008](#).

- A World Economic Forum report says Turkey surpassed EU member Poland and would-be members Bulgaria and Romania in economic reforms.

#### International News

- EU leaders are expected to approve at the December 14-15 summit talks in Brussels the EU foreign ministers' decision for partially freezing talks with Turkey. Olli Rehn, the EU commissioner for enlargement, said the EU had managed to avoid a train crash with Turkey.
- A two-day conference in Iran which called into question the Nazi Holocaust has sparked outrage among Holocaust survivors.
- Unidentified gunmen shot dead a judge from the governing Hamas movement in front of a courthouse in Gaza.
- Workers began a nationwide 24-hour strike in protest at the government's tight 2007 budget proposal, paralyzing transportation in Athens.

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